With Claudia's Assistance

By INA WRIGHT HANSON

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From the doorway Fitzgerald looked moodily at me from in front of the dresser. I looked moodily at Fitzgerald.

"She refused me," he said.

"I've got to go to Mrs. Whiting's dinner," I answered.

Fitz nodded and threw himself heavily into a chair.

"I wouldn't go, you know, after Mrs. Whiting's niece refused me, so she had to rustle up you."

I glared at him, then jerked open the top drawer.

"Seems to me, in the interest of humanity, you might have staved off your old proposal till after the dinner. I've got to take Miss Whiting in. What shall I say to her? I'm no society man."

"You might talk about me. It's darned strange she refuses me," Fitz responded modestly. "Of course I'm fat, but what of that? Look at my money?"

I turned from my hair brushing and regarded Fitz with surprise.

"She's different from other girls," he went on mournfully. "You never know what she is going to do or say next. She said if she ever found the man she wanted to marry and he didn't ask her she would propose to him. You say a word for me, old man, and maybe she will change her mind about it."

"All right," I said and started for the infernal dinner. If I had been left in peace I could have translated a few more pages of that Latin work I was on.

Why I should have (figuratively of course) fallen on my face and worshiped Claudia Whiting the moment I saw her I don't know. That any man could help adoring her after he came to know her is incredible, but I think I began before ever she said a word to me. It couldn't be because her eyes were the bluest I ever saw or her hair crinkled sunshine—I suppose a poet would describe it better—or her lips red as the roses she wore in her belt. One day since that dinner she told me something about affinities. It may be that mysterious word holds the reason.

What we talked of is vaguely remembered. I know that I walked homeward carrying with me a vision of sweetest seriousness, for that describes Claudia as she appeared that day. When I turned the corner, beyond which were my lodgings, I saw Fitzgerald at my gate, his broad back toward me. I remembered my forgotten promise and fled incontinently. I couldn't face him. Later I stole into my room like a thief in the night.

Next day I went to call on her and to make my peace with Fitz, who had interviewed me that morning. She was in the garden, and I stated the object of my call at once.

"If you knew him better you would appreciate him more," I said and launched forth at some length into his peculiar graces and virtues. Claudia listened, and when I had finished she leaned toward me, smiling roguishly.

"And didn't you care about coming to see me? If it had not been for Mr. Fitzgerald you would have come anyway, wouldn't you?"

To think that she should have looked straight into my heart and discovered my perfidy! I almost let go of my secret. I almost answered, "I came because I love you." And this on the second meeting.

Then because I must talk, and there were some things I must not say, I began talking of myself—my college life, my failing health, forcing me to live for years in the pine forests; then when my health was restored how the woods still held me with their solitudes, so that I was unhappy and ill at ease in society.

"I have quite a pretentious cabin there," I said. "In it are my books and my violin. Back of it flows a clear stream with trout waiting for me to catch them for my breakfast. Nothing is wanting there to make me entirely comfortable."

My face grew hot, for all at once I realized there was a want—a void—to be filled. That if I went back to my cabin now it would be as lacking as the body whose soul is not within.

"I was born and bred in the woods!" exclaimed Claudia. "The stars look closer and bigger than they do in the cities of the lowlands. Up there in the mountains are ferny nooks and manzanita; there is water cress which makes me hungry this minute. Oh, I know about the woods!" Her blue eyes were shining like the stars of which she spoke.

Then she asked me about my books, and I told her of my published ones and those in contemplation—dry old tomes—why should I have supposed that they would interest a young creature like her?

But I rambled on, lost in her sweet companionship, till the sun suddenly dropped out of sight, and I saw her shiver in the breeze that stirred the poplars. Then I remembered Fitz.

"Do give him another chance," I said perfunctorily as I rose to go. She looked at me seriously, but made no answer.

For the greater part of a month Fitz was away from town, and I saw Claudia nearly every day. Before going he asked my promise to say a word in his favor every time I saw her. There are limits to the duties of friendship, but I promised because I felt that he would make her a good husband. He was an honorable man and had more money than he knew what to do with.

She was such a bewildering little creature, was Claudia. At the first meeting she was so sweetly serious. She had told me since that she was frightened to death of me because I knew so much. Fancy it! The day she told me, though, she was bubbling over with laughter, and I suspect she was poking fun at me in her irrepressible way. Then there was the morning when we walked together to church and she talked so quietly of holy things, and there was that last afternoon in the garden before Fitz came home.

That day it was the hardest of all to forget myself and remember Fitz. Sometimes when the tenderness of my heart would creep into my words little spots of color would come and go in her girlish face. I scarcely saw her eyes that day, the white lids drooped so insistently over their blue beauty. At last I pulled myself together with the thought that he could do so much more for her than I, even if she could bring herself to think of me at all, and made my last earnest speech for him.

She frowned a little, then she smiled and looked thoughtful.

"I think I shall have to teach you to read poetry," she said.

"Will you?" I asked eagerly.

"Begin on 'The Courtship of Miles Standish,' then," she answered and ran, laughing, up the walk.

"I did the best I could for you, Fitz," I told him when he returned that evening. And I rehearsed the last speech in full.

"What did she say?" he demanded.

"Why—she didn't say anything to that. She told me—or hinted—that my education was deficient because I had little knowledge of poetry, and she told me to begin on 'The Courtship of Miles Standish.'"

Fitz looked at me mournfully. "That's my finish then. Have you read it?"

"I was just beginning."

Fitz walked heavily from the room, and I took up my new Longfellow.

Short of stature he was, but strongly
built and athletic;
Brown as a nut was his face, but his
russet beard was already
Flaked with patches of snow.

Pretty good description of myself, I thought. Not exactly patches, but there were certainly threads of gray. I read on till the speech was finished, the egotistical words of Miles Standish; then I bowed my head in shame and anger. I had talked steadily of myself and my work, but she had led me on. She had no right to call me down so. Tomorrow I would go back to my cabin and forget, but yet I knew I should always remember. I was still brooding when Fitz came back.

"I don't blame you, old man," he began. "Probably you'll make her happier; but, Lord, look at my money!"

I blinked at him as he settled down.

"Neat way she had of bringing matters to a focus," he went on, picking up my book which lay face downward on the table. "Why, darned if I believe you've read it all!"

"I've read enough," I said resentfully. "I read what she thinks of me."

One moment that blessed Fitz gazed at me, then in words of one syllable he gave me the gist of that poem—made me to understand that my Claudia was impersonating the Puritan maiden in her immortal speech, "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?"

And to think I ever had deemed Fitzgerald stupid!

I found my blessed girl in the garden, but she did not hear my approach. She was on tiptoe, trying to reach a rose which swung above her head.

"I have come to speak for myself, Claudia," I said.

The dear hands ceased from their quest to hide the blushes of her sweet face. Her girlish form trembled.

"You think me bold!" she cried apprehensively.

It was such a glorious affair to prove to her just what I did think of her, and it took a long time. And then she explained to me about affinities.

Some Funny Speeches.

An Irishman who was very ill, when the physician told him that he must prescribe an emetic for him, said, "Indeed, doctor, an emetic will never do me any good, for I have taken several and could never keep one of them upon my stomach." An Irishman at cards, on inspecting the pool and finding it deficient, exclaimed: "Here is a shilling short. Who put it in?" A poor Irish servant maid who was left handed placed the knives and forks upon the dinner table in the same awkward fashion. Her master remarked to her that she had placed them all left handed. "Ah, true, indeed, sir," she said, "and so I have! Would you be pleased to help me to turn the table?" Doyle and Yelverton, two eminent members of the Irish bar, quarreled one day so violently that from hard words they came to hard blows. Doyle, a powerful man with the fists, knocked down Yelverton twice, exclaiming, "You scoundrel, I'll make you behave yourself like a gentleman!" To which Yelverton, rising, replied, with equal indignation: "No, sir; never! I defy you! You could not do it!"—London Spectator.

The Queer Burmans.

One who has lived among them says: "The Burmans are a primitive people. They are a very young people. There are certain marks and signs by which physiologists can determine the relative youth or age of a race. One of these is the physical differentiation between boys and girls. In early races it is slight. As the race grows old it develops. If you dressed a Burman boy of eighteen in a girl's dress or a Burmese girl of the same age in a boy's dress you could not distinguish quickly true from false. Face and figure and voice are very similar. In as old people such as the French or the Brahmans in India a boy begins to differ from a girl very early indeed. Their faces seem almost different types. Their figures even at twelve could not be disguised by any clothing. Their voices are utterly different."

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IN CHANCERY OF NEW JERSEY—To Peter Cogan, Mrs. Peter Cogan and Bridget Cogan Daly.

By virtue of an order of the Court of Chancery of New Jersey, made on the day of the date hereof, in a cause wherein the Essex County Building and Loan Association is complainant, and you and others are defendants, you are required to appear and plead, demur, or answer to the complainant's bill, on or before the third day of September next, or the said bill will be taken as confessed against you.

This said bill is filed to foreclose two mortgages upon land in the town of Bloomfield, Essex County, New Jersey, one dated September 16, 1876, given by Patrick Convey and Betsy Convey, his wife, to Daniel M. Lyon and assigned to complainant; the other dated May 18, 1904, given by Mary Convey to complainant.

And you Peter Cogan and you Bridget Cogan Daly are made defendants because you are heirs at law of Mary Convey deceased, and claim some interest in said mortgaged premises, and you Mrs. Peter Cogan are made a defendant because you are the wife of Peter Cogan and claim an inchoate right of dower in said mortgaged premises.

Dated July 2, 1906.

PILCH & PILCH,
Solicitors for Complainant.
22 Clinton Street, Newark, N. J.

June 4, 1906.

ESTATE OF FRANCES A. HARRISON, deceased.

Pursuant to the order of GEORGE H. RUSSELL, Surrogate of the County of Essex, this day made, on the application of the undersigned executor of said deceased, notice is hereby given to the creditors of said deceased to exhibit to the subscriber under oath or affirmation their claims and demands against the estate of said deceased, within nine months from this date, or they will be forever barred from prosecuting or recovering the same against the subscriber.

MARCUS S. CRANE.

June 9, 1906.

ESTATE OF ANNIE O. DOWD DECEASED.

Pursuant to the order of GEORGE H. RUSSELL, Surrogate of the County of Essex, this day made, on the application of the undersigned executor of said deceased, notice is hereby given to the creditors of said deceased to exhibit to the subscriber under oath or affirmation their claims and demands against the estate of said deceased, within nine months from this date, or they will be forever barred from prosecuting or recovering the same against the subscriber.

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